

DEVELOPMENT CONTROL FORUM

10 September 2014
11.30 am

Present: Councillors Blencowe, Dryden, Hipkin and Pippas.

City Development Manager (Chair): Sarah Dyer
Principal Planning Officer: Toni Collins
Committee Manager: Claire Tunnicliffe

For Applicant:

Applicant Representative: Andy Thompson (Beacon Planning)
Applicant Representative: (Architect for applicant).
Applicant Representative

For Petitioners (in objection):

Lead Petitioner: Harry Goode
Resident: Lynette Gilbert
Resident: Helen Tonks

FOR THE INFORMATION OF THE COUNCIL

1 Declarations of Interest

No declarations were declared.

2 Induction by the Chair

The Chair outlined the role and purpose of the Development Control Forum. Those present were informed that no decisions would be taken at the meeting.

3 Application and Petition Details

Committee: Planning Committee
Date: 10 September 2014
Application No: 14/1154/FUL
Site Address: Wests Garage Site, 217 Newmarket Road
Description: The erection of new student housing (222 study bedrooms) and associated communal facilities, cycle parking, and external landscaping following demolition of the existing buildings.
Applicant: TBC

Agent: Beacon Planning LTD
Address: 7 Quay Court, Colliers Lane, Stow-cm-Quay, Cambridge, CB25 9AU
Lead Petitioner: Harry Goode
Address: 18 Godesdone Road, Cambridge, CB5 8HR
Case Officer: Tony Collins, Principal Planning Officer

Text of Petition:

Our Grounds for objecting to the Application:

- i. It's mass, bulk and roofline will have a negative impact on:
 - The character and appearance of the adjacent conservation area (ref: Local Plan Policy 4/11, Objective 9 and paras 3.4.2 and 3.4.14 of the Eastern Gate Supplementary Planning Document).
 - The amenity of residents in the CHS Group social housing opposite, on the east side of River Lane (ref: Local Plan Policy 3/12).
- ii. The proposal represents gross overdevelopment of the site, exacerbated by a hostile design that makes no attempt to integrate the scheme with the local community or enhance the public realm (ref: Local Plan Policies 3/4, 3/7 and Para 3.4.2 of the Eastern Gate SPD).
- iii. The extremely close proximity of the proposed hostel to residents in River Lane, Beche Road and Godesdone Road, coupled with the large number of occupants proposed, will cause considerable noise and disturbance (ref: Local Plan Policies 7/10 and 5/7).
- iv. The location of the hostel on a key junction directly opposite a public house raises major concerns about highway safety, both for the student occupants and motorists using the junction.
- v. The site is in a controlled parking zone made up of narrow residential streets lacking any adequate provision of parental drop off / pick up (ref: Local Plan Policy 8/2).

Our suggested changes:

- i. In keeping with the conservation area, and to mark the necessary break between north and south sides of Newmarket Road, student accommodation on the site should be in vertical units of 10 – 12 students per unit. This would create space for green interstices between units.
- ii. Units should not exceed two storeys, with a further sloping roof space or well set back further storey.
- iii. Development on the site should be sufficiently set back on all sides to allow a screen of tree planting.

- iv. Suitable drop off and pick up facilities for students should be provided internally. The entrance to such facilities should be situated as far down River Lane as possible, to avoid the dangers of traffic backing up towards the junction with Newmarket Road.
- v. With these changes, a new model of high quality student accommodation would be established for Cambridge, rejecting barracks like structures in favour of schemes integrated with local communities.

Case by Applicants:

1. The application is for a new purpose built student accommodation block, not a hostel as had been described.
2. There would be associated communal facilities, cycle parking and external landscaping of the existing building.
3. Wests had operated on this site since 1950 and would be relocating which would allow expansion of the business.
4. It would not be possible to expand the current building on the site.
5. In 2013 an application was withdrawn as this had not been supported by the Officers or members of the public.
6. Details from the Design Guide, using the Local Plan and its supplementary planning documents, was used as a starting point for the current application as submitted in July 2014.
7. This application was considerably different to the original application and major changes had been made to reflect that the site sits within an area of transformation.
8. The previous design was busy and confusing and of an awkward composition.
9. The buildings are of an appropriate height, with three plus one stories facing Newmarket Road; none would have an adverse effect on the local area.
10. The top floor is set back with the buildings reducing in size towards the conservation area.
11. The view from Elizabeth Way Bridge would show minimal impact to the sky line as the buildings would largely be screened by three story town houses. The five storey hotel would be more prominent on the sky line.
12. A public consultation was undertaken in June 2014 and there had been meetings with residents and officers previously.
13. The development would help to meet the need for student accommodation in Cambridge.
14. Designed in consultation with Anglian Ruskin University who advised that there is a need for hall style accommodation for first year students. The design had been inspired by Georgian townhouse typology.

15. There was no provision for student car parking on site to encourage green modes of transport.
16. Believed that the constraints of building in a conservation area had been turned into a positive.
17. The choice of materials was a reflection of the buildings sensitivity to the area.

Case by Petitioners:

18. In May 2014, the Design and Conservation Panel gave five red lights to the development and rejected the proposal.
19. Residents shared the concerns raised by the Panel and believed that the development would have an adverse impact on neighbouring properties.
20. The development would be harmful to the character and appearance of a historic high street and residential conservation area.
21. The Eastern Gate SPD states that doubled-banked blocks are identified as problematic; doubled-banked blocks are included into the top storey footprint.
22. The site was too narrow for the proposed development with the building built to the boundaries, with solid high walls and the pavements are narrow. Tree planting was only achieved by building into River Lane, which was restricted in width on the corner.
23. There would be a loss of parking bays if River Lane was narrowed.
24. The current site had an open aspect with on street greenery, which was encouraged in the Local Plan.
25. The development would have twelve disabled units but offered no disabled parking.
26. The allocated cycle spaces were unworkable with access to the main cycle store down a private road.
27. There was not space within the site for safe access to the cycle storage; the second cycle storage was accessed from the Newmarket Road footpath which could encourage cycling on the footpath.
28. The current site had three parking spaces but there would be no vehicle access into the site.
29. The proposed scheme estimates that there would be seventy trips a day by taxi but there was no mention of other traffic.
30. There was no allocated drop off or pick up areas for the start and end of term busy period and no sufficient turning circle.
31. This application was the same over development as the first application.
32. The site was an integral part of the historic high street and the Eastern Gate SPD outlined 'important visual cues' and references for development in the area.

33. The application ignored these cues and instead sought to inject bulky 'Travelodge style' form into the historic high street.
34. The development would set a precedent for further harmful development on the north side of the high street.
35. The building height facing Newmarket Road and River Lane would be higher than the recently installed street lamps.
36. The development would create an over bearing impact and loss of light for residents living opposite on River Lane.

Case Officers Comments:

37. Approximately twenty individual representations had been received to date.
38. Have received comments from a number of consultees:
 - Environmental Health: Do not object to the application but have recommended significant conditions on noise, traffic and contaminated land.
 - Highways: Have said that the building could be set further back from the boundary on River Road.
 - Access Officer: Has recommended improvements for disabled parking.

Members' Questions

39. What provisions have been made during peak drop off and pick up times for students.
40. What provision has been made for disabled parking?
41. Will there be any student parking on site?
42. Would the applicant make any changes to the scheme to make it more acceptable?
43. Would the applicant accept that there is a problem with the buildings up against the footpaths?
44. Why not increase the public space?
45. With regards to amenity space had it been taken into account that those 222 students would have friends to stay over?
46. The design is drawn on the Halls of Residence approach.
47. What is the impact of overshadowing on properties on River Lane?
48. Has there been any consultation with Cambridge University on this application?
49. What is the occupancy during non-term time?

Response to Members' Questions.

50. Each student would be given a time slot for allocated parking on River Lane for the start and end of term for pick up and drop off.
51. There is no parking for blue badge holders on site but they are able to park anywhere in the area.
52. There is no allocated student parking on site.
53. Does not agree that any changes are needed to the application.
54. Would not see any problems with the proximity of the buildings to the footpath.
55. River Lane is a wide street and it would not be a positive step to move the proposed buildings back further. The proposed buildings are set back and there is a landscaped zone introduced to the centre of River Lane.
56. The provision, size and quality of the amenity space was very high.
57. There has been no consultation with Cambridge University on this application. The application has been designed in line with the specification and consultation with Anglian Ruskin University, who have challenged the process to ensure a better managed scheme than the previous application.
58. There would be the standard agreement that the accommodation would be used by full time students during term time. Outside of term time the accommodation could be used by others who are not students.
59. This is not a Halls of Residence; the rooms have been broken into clusters to encourage communication between students and include communal space. There are vertical breaks and recesses to articulate the facade.

Summing up by the Applicants

60. The development would not have a negative impact to the surrounding area.
61. The existing building detracts from the character of the conservation area.
62. There have been two public consultations regarding this development and the scheme has undergone many changes.
63. The application would bring a reduction in daily car movements at a busy junction and the closure of vehicle access onto Newmarket Road.
64. The application brings much needed student accommodation to Cambridge.
65. The development meets the guidelines within the National Planning Framework.

66. Creates a provision of a green amenity space and significant enhancement to the public realm.
67. The concerns highlighted have been raised by fear.
68. The development would create a payment of £300,000 towards public spaces.
69. Does not accept the argument of over development.

Summing up by the Petitioners

70. The application is one of gross over development, the wrong development model, hostile in design, offers inadequate open spaces.
71. The scale, bulk and flat-roofed form is harmful to the character and appearance of the historic high street in a residential conservation area.
72. The development would have an unacceptable impact on neighbouring properties due to bulk, loss of light and overlooking.
73. The high density student blocks would bring an increase in noise to those neighbours directly adjacent to development.
74. The application is similar to the first application.
75. The applicant has 'cherry picked' aspects from the Local Plan.

The meeting ended at 11.30 am

CHAIR